DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 220 TM 850 722

AUTHOR	Afflerbach, Peter
TITLE	Statewide Assessment of Writing.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation, Princeton, N.J.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	ERIC/TME-R-87
PUB DATE	Apr 85
CONTRACT	400-83-0015
NOTE	46p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ 08541 ($7.50).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Utilization; Minimum Competency Testing; *National Surveys; Sampling; Scoring; *State Programs; Test Results; *Test Use; *Writing Evaluation; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the status of assessment of writing as it is currently performed in the United States. All fifty states and the District of Columbia responded to a survey requesting information on their testing programs. Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia were found to assess writing on the statewide level, and eight states were in the process of developing procedures. Statewide assessment was made at various grade levels. Purpose for statewide assessment varied, as did the population taking the test. States which conducted comprehensive assessment (where the writing ability of every student in a specific grade was assessed) could utilize the results in several ways. Results were used to indicate the need for remediation in writing, to determine whether minimum competency requirements had been met for graduation, and to provide information for improving curriculum and instruction. The appendix provides a state by state summary of survey results. (LMO)

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STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

TME REPORT 87

by
Peter Afflerbach

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ERIC/TME Report 87

THE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

by

Peter Afflerbach

Division of Educational Studies

Emory University

Atlanta, GA 30322

April 1985

ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation

Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ 08541-0001

The material in this publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education, U. S. Department of Education. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to qualified professionals for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either these reviewers or the National Institute of Education.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests,
Measurement, and Evaluation
Educational Testing Service
Princeton, NJ 08541

The National Institute of Education

This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education under contract no. NIE-400-83-0015. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or the Department of Education.

The author would like to thank Sean Walmsley, who gave valuable comment on an earlier draft of this paper, and the numerous state education agency contact people who supplied information about their programs.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Results of the Survey.....3

Conclusion.....9

References.....11

Appendix: Survey Results.....13
(listed alphabetically by state)

Introduction

Recently, students' writing ability has been a salient educational concern. Following several years of complaints about the sorry state of writing in American schools (e.g., Graves, 1978; Sheils, 1975), there has been a surge of interest in how students learn to write (e.g., Bereiter, 1980; Graves & Calkins, 1980), the quality and method of writing instruction (e.g., Applebee, 1981; Walmsley, 1980); and how writing may be responded to or evaluated (e.g., Cooper & Odell, 1977; Hillerich, 1979; Searle & Dillon, 1980).

At the same time, there continues the demand for schools' accountability in providing students with basic skills (Wigdor & Garner, 1982). This has led to utilization of writing research and its results for specifying what constitutes competency in writing, identifying children's difficulties in writing so they may be remedied, and identifying those writing program features that encourage and develop student writing.

Many states have recently introduced procedures for accomplishing all or some of these goals by establishing minimum competency tests for high school graduation, by setting up a series of diagnostic tests across elementary and secondary grades, or by performing sample assessments at the statewide level. Other states regard the issue as a local one, leaving

the perogative of writing assessment to local school districts.

While most educators know what their own state requires in terms of minimal competencies, provides for diagnostic testing purposes in writing, or uses to evaluate writing programs, we have no comprehensive picture of the assessment procedures required by all the states in the Union. Lawlor (1979) has analyzed the writing minimal competencies of seven states, and Frederick (1979) has reviewed writing assessment as performed in sixteen states. A recent NAEP state-of-the-states survey (1983) found that 39 of 47 states responding to the survey conduct statewide testing programs, but it did not report on the frequency or status of writing assessment in the states.

This paper examines the status of assessment of writing as it is currently performed in the United States. The paper considers the current status of writing assessment in each state, the grade level(s) at which the assessment is made, whether assessment is comprehensive (i.e., made of every student in the state at a certain grade level) or of a sample population, the purpose of the assessment, the actual tasks required in the assessment, and the methods of scoring the assessment. Also, unique writing assessment features (such as one state's inclusion of a writing

apprehension questionnaire, and another's provision of two assessment sessions for the revision of writing samples) are noted.

All fifty states and the District of Columbia responded to requests for information on their testing programs. An NCES yearbook, Educational Directory of State Education Agency Officials (Porter, 1981), was used to obtain the names of the appropriate officials and departments, and all information was supplied by an official familiar with, or responsible for, the testing program. Names and phone numbers of state education agency directors or supervisors are included in the Appendix.

Results of the Survey

Test Status

Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia currently assess writing on the statewide level. Eight states are in the process of developing assessment procedures. Seventeen states do not conduct statewide assessment of writing.

Grade Level

The statewide assessment of writing is made at various grade levels. Some states assess at three grade

levels (e.g., Alabama, Hawaii, Minnesota), some at two grade levels (e.g., Maryland, Nevada), and some at one level (e.g., Connecticut). Other states require the student to pass the test by a certain grade level for promotion or graduation (e.g., Texas' Exit Level Assessment).

Who Takes the Test

As the purpose of statewide assessment of writing varies, either to certify a student as minimally competent, to diagnose particular writing difficulties, or to evaluate a writing program, so too does the population that takes the test. Some states require comprehensive assessment, where all students at a specific grade take the writing assessment, while other states assess sample populations, much in the same way as the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Utilization of Test Results

Comprehensive Assessment. Those states which conduct comprehensive assessment (where the writing ability of every student in a specific grade is assessed) can utilize the results in several ways, though not all states use assessment findings to the same purpose.

Comprehensive assessment results may be used as

indicators of the need for remediation in writing. A student who performs poorly may be recommended for, or required to take, special writing instruction. The assessment of writing at earlier grades is often so utilized.

Some states utilize comprehensive assessment results to determine whether minimum competency requirements have been met for graduation, or for the award of a specific diploma. Recently, such minimum competency tests have been challenged in court (e.g., Debra P. vs. Turlington, 1979). There has been much debate (Madaus, 1983; Wigdor & Garner, 1982) concerning the validity of such tests (i.e., the extent to which the tests measure what is actually taught in the classroom).

Additionally, comprehensive assessment results may provide information for improving curriculum and instruction. Poor performance on specific items may indicate lack of appropriate instruction, materials, or both. Increases in writing performance may signal writing programs of exceptional quality. Of course, findings of such assessments must be carefully analyzed before one can begin to suggest that increases in writing performance are attributable to specific programs or program components.

Sample Assessment In states where writing assessment is made of sample populations (e.g.,

Illinois test 2400 students each at grades 4, 8 and 11), an approximate level of writing ability of groups or levels of students may be inferred. The effectiveness of a writing program may also be examined. Because of the restricted (i.e., not all students take the test) nature of sample assessment, individuals' writing ability is not normally examined, except as a part of a larger group.

Type of Task

The tasks included in statewide writing assessment vary greatly. In general, writing ability is tested by objective test items (usually multiple choice), with actual writing samples, or with both combined.

Objective test items typically include components of writing such as handwriting, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Also found on some objective item tests are "complex composition skills" (Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1983) such as sentence structure and paragraph organization. Some states which use objective test formats in lieu of actual writing samples acknowledge that actual writing samples are probably more valid measures of students' writing ability (e.g., California Assessment Program). The objective test format is, however, often less costly and time consuming to administer and score (Frederick, 1979; Stiggins, 1982).

State assessments which use actual writing samples vary considerably, ranging from narrative and expository to descriptive and persuasive writing tasks. Specific tasks within these modes include letter writing (often a business letter), descriptions of a place (such as a favorite place), and persuasive writing (e.g., why the principal should extend lunch period by 15 minutes). Some states include "survival skills" (e.g., completing job and license application forms) as component parts of their writing assessment. The Appendix summarizes the specific writing tasks required by each state.

Scoring

Machine-scoring of objective multiple-choice tests is common. Assessments which use actual samples of student writing employ several scoring methods, including holistic scoring (see Cooper, 1977), primary trait scoring (see Lloyd-Jones, 1977), and analytical scoring. Some states use combinations of these scoring procedures; for example, initially scoring papers using the holistic method, and then scoring analytically those which do not receive a passing mark. Other states use modified procedures which draw from one or more of the above procedures (e.g., South Carolina uses a "modified holistic" scoring procedure).

Guide to the Appendix

The Appendix is a compilation of information concerning assessment of writing by individual states. In it, the following information is given for most states:

Assessment Title. The name of the writing assessment (e.g., Alabama Basic Competency Test) is listed next to the state.

Grade. The Appendix lists grade(s) at which assessment is made.

Task. The nature of the writing assessment task (e.g., Write a paragraph on a given topic) is listed. The tasks were taken from the actual tests, except where test items are considered secure. In these instances, sample tasks provided by the state education agency were used.

Scoring Method. Objective item tests are machine scored. Actual writing samples are scored by the method listed (e.g., Holistic).

Assessment Type. A comprehensive assessment is one that is taken by every student at a specific grade level. A sample assessment is one that is given to a representative sample of students. The size of the sample and the grade level(s) are given in most instances.

Purpose. The rationales for the assessment (e.g., competency certification), and the utilization of the

assessment results are listed opposite this heading.

Conclusion

An examination of the data in the Appendix indicates the wide variety in the statewide assessment of writing. This is, in part, a reflection of the purpose of the assessment. A comprehensive assessment performed at grade 4 will most likely be used for diagnostic purposes, while one performed at grade 12 might be for competency certification. In a state where there is an interest in evaluating a writing program, a sample assessment might be utilized.

A second factor affecting the nature of the assessment concerns the construction of the assessment. Those who develop writing assessments, typically state education agency employees or consultants, bring a variety of types of professional training to the task. Among the group given the task of developing the writing assessment, there may be differences in opinion as to what to include (e.g., business letter, application forms to be filled out, essay on a favorite place) in the assessment, and how to best elicit and score writing samples.

Finally, most statewide assessments of writing are performed under time and financial constraints. A carefully planned assessment which takes consideration of recent research in writing might not be utilized if

money is not available for administering and scoring the test, or if there is not adequate time for the assessment sessions or for scoring the assessment.

Given the factors which influence the status of writing assessment, the variety found among the states is not surprising. Because many statewide assessments are being developed, or have just recently been implemented, it should be interesting and worthwhile to pay close attention to findings and suggestions from such assessments.

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Appendix

SURVEY RESULTS

Author Note. Many states are developing, or considering developing statewide writing assessment procedures. Thus, this list should be considered tentative. Those interested in the current status of a specific state's assessment should contact the state education agency or official listed for that state.

Appendix: Survey Results

ALABAMA

Alabama Basic Competency Test

Grade	Task
3	Label pictures; copy words or short sentences; expand topic sentences by adding two or more sentences; write legibly; proofread.
6	Write paragraph on given topic. Given topic sentence, write four supporting sentences, including a concluding sentence to the paragraph.
9	Write paragraph on given topic. (e.g., My Favorite Season). Must write paragraph of 5 to 8 sentences. Should include topic sentence, 3 to 5 supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Write a one-sentence summary of given paragraph.

Scoring method: Analytical

Assessment type: Comprehensive. Every student in grades 3, 6, and 9.

Purpose: Determine needs of individual student relative to minimum skills.

Contact person: Martha Jungwirth
Education Specialist
State of Alabama
Department of Education
State Office Building
Montgomery, AL 36130

ALASKA

No statewide assessment. Local districts determine curriculum and assessment.

Contact person: Annie Calkins
Department of Education
(907) 465-2841

ARIZONA

No statewide assessment. Specific competencies are determined and assessed at the local district level with criterion-referenced tests. State requires 6th grade competency in written communicative skills prior to receiving 8th grade certificate of promotion.

Scoring Method: Determined locally.

Assessment type: Comprehensive. Each student must be assessed and certified as having met minimum requirements.

Purpose: Obtain information needed for planning instruction that provides for levels of achievement, progress rates, and special skill needs.

Note: Recent state legislation requires composition skills testing of 1,000 students each in grades 4,8 and 11 in a week in April 1985. This is for one year only. The 1983-84 NAEP Writing Assessment instruments will be used.

Contact person: Veronica Zepeda
Education Program Specialist
(602) 255-4361

ARKANSAS

Statewide assessment in development. Assessment specifications not available.

Contact person: Dr. Constance Dardin
(501) 371-1461

CALIFORNIA

Program I: Student Proficiency Test

Required for high school graduation. Developed at local school district level. State provides sample assessment exercises (Sample Assessment Exercises Manual) to aid districts in designing their own assessment instruments.

Scoring method: Determined locally.

CALIFORNIA, continued

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Purpose: To verify minimum competencies of student.

Program II: California Assessment Program

Grade	Task
3	Objective multiple choice test of writing process skills dealing primarily with matters of judgement in writing (e.g. complete a sentence by choosing correct word), and supporting skills (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization).
3	Objective multiple choice test of writing process skills and supporting skills.
12	Objective multiple choice test of writing process skills and supporting skills.

Note: The California Assessment Program uses "matrix sampling" where each student receives only a portion of all the items on the total test. With matrix sampling, individual student results cannot be obtained, but accurate estimates of the overall performance of groups of students can be computed.

Assessment type: Comprehensive. All 3rd, 6th, 8th and 12th graders.

Purpose: Identification of programmatic strengths and weaknesses.

Note: There is also an objective, multiple choice test of writing process skills and supporting skills for grade 8. In the near future, there will also be a statewide direct writing assessment.

Contact person: David Gordon, Associate Superintendent
Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
(916) 445-0297

COLORADO

No mandatory state wide assessment. Competency tests are prerogative of local school board. Statewide Writing Assessment program available to districts for voluntary participation.

COLORADO, continued

Contact person: Jane Larsh
School Improvement/Leadership Services Unit
(303) 866-2212

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Ninth Grade Proficiency Test

Grade	Task
9	Objective, 36-item multiple choice test including Mechanics of Expression (e.g., use correct capitalization), Composing and Organizing Skills (e.g., language appropriate to writers' purpose and audience), and Library Skills for Writing Tasks (e.g., demonstrate dictionary skills). Write about a topic you are familiar with (e.g., "Something You Own").

Scoring Method: Holistic

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Purpose: Identify those students who may need remedial help in the basic skills.

Note: A grades 4-6-8 Mastery Test--census testing--will also include a writing sample. The sample will be holistically scored. If sample is below standard, it will be scored analytically.

Contact person: Pat Forione, Chief
Bureau of Research, Planning & Evaluation
Department of Education
Hartford, CT 06115

DELAWARE

No statewide assessment. State requires that students be certified as having met minimal performance requirements in writing before graduation. State sets guidelines, school districts determine procedures for assessment.

DELAWARE, continued

Contact person: Sidney Collison,
Director of Instruction
Department of Public Instruction
Townsend Bldg.
P.O. Box 1402
Dover, DE 19901

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Writing Competency Test

Grade	Task
1 & 2	Manuscript lettering; write a friendly letter; cursive writing.
4	Write a business letter.
6	Write two unified paragraphs.

Scoring method: Holistic.

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Purpose: To determine mastery of writing objectives.

Contact person: Floretta McKenzie
Superintendent of Schools
(202) 724-4222

FLORIDA

State Student Achievement of minimum performance standards

Part I (SSAT-I): Measure student achievement of minimum performance standards

Grade	Task
3	Objective multiple-choice test given at all four levels.
5	
8	
11	

FLORIDA, continued

Assessment type: Comprehensive

Purpose: To identify strengths and weaknesses in student achievement and curricular programs.

Part II (SSAT-II): Application of basic skills to everyday situations

Grade	Task
11 or 12	Complete a check and its stub; complete accurately common application forms; include necessary information when writing letters to supply or request information.

Assessment type: Comprehensive

Purpose: To verify minimum competencies for high school diploma

Florida Minimal Skills Writing Assessment

Grade	Task
3	Typical tasks include: copy a letter, write the letters of the alphabet in sequence, capitalize correctly.
5	Typical tasks include: write declarative sentences, spell words, write legibly in cursive and manuscript.
8	Typical tasks include: write compound declarative sentences, write a set of simple directions, group words or objects that are familiar.
11	Typical tasks include: write a business letter. use correct punctuation, organize information for a report under appropriate headings.

Scoring method: Rating scales ranging from 0-5.

Assessment type: Sample.

Purpose: Assessment of writing skills that do not lend themselves to measurement through multiple-choice items.

FLORIDA, continued

Contact person: Director of Writing Assessment
State of Florida
Department of Education
The Capitol, Plaza Level
Tallahassee, FL 32301

GEORGIA

Statewide assessment in development. Students compose letters, reports, essays and stories, using writing in personal, social, academic and business situations.

Scoring method: Directed holistic. Analytic scoring will be used in cases where paper does not meet minimum requirements under directed holistic scoring method.

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Contact person: Elizabeth Creech
Consultant, Student Assessment
(404) 656-2661

HAWAII

Hawaii Writing Assessment

Grade	Task
4	Write to express feelings (e.g., How You Feel About a Given Situation or Topic); to provide information (e.g., Write Directions); to promote ideas (e.g., Letter to the Principal); to entertain (e.g., Message in a Bottle).
8	Same as Grade 4 except task of "writing to provide information" is a report of an accident and "writing to persuade" is an argument for or against more school.
11	Same as Grade 8.

Scoring method: Holistic and trait (primary, secondary and tertiary).

Assessment type: Sample. Approximately 2000 students each in grades 4, 8, and 11.

HAWAII, continued

Purpose: Determine the extent to which students in the public schools are achieveing the goals and objectives identified for writing, and to provide a basis for improvement in curriculum and instruction.

Contact person: Writing Assessment Director
Elementary Language Arts
Department of Education
189 Lunalilo Home Rd. 2nd Floor
Honolulu, Hawaii 96825

IDAHO

Idaho Proficiency Test (Statewide assessment is "district-optional")

Grade	Task
9	Objective spelling, mechanics and usage tests. All writing tasks involve writing letters; a letter of description (descriptive writing), a letter of nomination(persuasive writing), and a letter of application (business letter).

Scoring method: Holistic

Purpose: Identify any areas of weakness or deficiency that should be remedied prior to graduation.

Contact person: Leila Lewis, Proficiency Testing
(208) 334-2113

ILLINOIS

Illinois Inventory of Educational Progress

Grade	Task
4	Given a statement, agree or disagree with that statement.
8, 11	Same as Grade 4.

Note: Illinois includes a multiple choice writing apprehension test at each grade level.

ILLINOIS, continued

Scoring method: Analytic scale for argumentative prompt. Alternative scales for different discourse domains are being developed.

Assessment type: Sample. 2400 students each at grades 4, 8 and 11.

Purpose: Inventory of educational progress.

Contact person: Norman Stenzel
(217) 782-4321

INDIANA

Indiana Basic Skills Competency Testing and Remediation Program (in development)

Grade	Task
3	Prompts to elicit actual writing samples are being developed.
6	Sixth grade will include persuasive writing. One other grade to be determined.

Scoring method: Holistic, and primary trait (for diagnostic purposes)

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Purpose: Determine which students need remediation.

Contact person: Dr. William Strange, Director
(317) 927-0213

IOWA

No statewide assessment. Competency testing is at the prerogative of local school boards.

Contact person: Lory N. Johnson
Consultant, Language Arts
Department of Public Instruction
Grimes State Office Bldg.
Des Moines, IA 50319

KANSAS

No statewide assessment.

Contact person: Mel Riggs
Education Program Specialist
Kansas State Education Bldg.
120 East 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

KENTUCKY

Currently uses "mechanics" and "expression" subtests of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), Form U, McGraw-Hill. Statewide assessment in development.

Note: Statewide assessment of writing skills using objective tests will begin in Spring 1986. Students K-12 will be assessed.

Contact person: Joseph Clark
Director of Language Arts
(502) 564-2672

LOUISIANA

Program I: State Assessment Program
Program II: Basic Skills Testing Program

Writing assessment is undertaken with two programs. Program I samples 5% of the tests given to students in grades 3,7 and 10 (in a manner similar to the NAEP). Program II, a basic skills program, will assess every student's writing ability at each grade (effective grades 2-12, 1992).

Scoring method: Program I-Primary trait and multiple choice objective test.
Program II-Multiple choice objective test.

Assessment type: Program I-Sample (5% of all tests are scored).
Program II-Comprehensive. Students at every grade level will be assessed.

LOUISIANA, continued

Note: The 95% of the writing samples from Program I that are not scored at the state level are available for districts to score. The state provides training necessary for the interested districts.

Contact person: Donna Nola
(504) 342-3743

MAINE

Grade	Task
4	Write an expressive selection (e.g., How you feel on a rainy school morning).
8	Same as Grade 4.
11	Write a descriptive essay about something you know about (e.g., Acadia National Park).

Scoring Method: Grades 4 & 8: Primary trait; Grade 11: Holistic. On all grade levels, a second scoring method has been utilized, on which is a "more specific holistic scale" consisting of a 7-point competence scale.

Assessment type: Sample. Approximately 1500 students each at grades 4, 8, 11.

Purpose: To examine the condition of writing performance in the state and make recommendations based on findings.

Note: Maine encourages students to write drafts of their writing tasks and provides them with dictionaries to assist in some of the mechanical aspects of writing. A new assessment program will test all students in grades 4, 8 and 11 and will require writing samples that are more extensive than those of the 1982 assessment. The new assessment will be implemented Fall, 1985.

Contact Person: Horace P. Maxcy, Jr.
Coordinator for Planning,
Research & Evaluation
(207) 289-2321

MARYLAND

Maryland Functional Writing Test

Grade	Task
7	Level I: Objective, multiple choice test
9	Level II: Write an expository selection; write a narrative selection.

Note: Writing revision checklist consisting of 10 questions is included during assessment (e.g., Did you write on the assigned topic? Did you put your ideas in a clear order?)

Scoring method: Modified holistic, If student does not meet minimum acceptability on holistic scale, writing samples are then scored using the analytic method.

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Purpose: Level I: Diagnostic
Level II: To certify graduation competency in writing and to provide instructional feedback to students.

Contact person: Mary Crovo
Specialist in Research & Measurement
(301) 659-2369

MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts Assessment of Basic Skills

Grade	Task
7,8 or 9	Write a short letter for a stated purpose (e.g., a business letter); write a longer essay on a given topic (e.g., Write about a person who has influenced you).

Scoring method: Holistic. If paper does not meet minimum acceptability under holistic scoring method, it is then scored using the analytic method.

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Purpose: Determine achievement levels of student.

MASSACHUSETTS, continued

Contact person: Matthew Towle
Bureau of Research & Assessment
Massachusetts Department of Education
1385 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02169

MICHIGAN

Michigan Educational Assessment Program

Grade	Task
4	Write an expressive selection; write a persuasive selection.
7	Same as Grade 4
10	Same as Grades 4 & 7.

Scoring method: Primary trait.

Assessment type: Sample. 240 4th graders, 1300 7th graders and 1000 10th graders.

Purpose: Provide information useful for educational decision-making to the State's educators, including classroom teachers, instructional specialists, and others.

Note: The above assessment occurred during only one year (1982-83) and has not been repeated. Current plans call for annual sample-testing of writing starting in 1987.

Contact person: Edward Roeber
(517) 373-8393

MINNESOTA

Minnesota Language Assessment

Grade	Task
6,9 & 11	(For all grades) essays including the following modes: narrating, describing, explaining, summarizing, persuading and analyzing. Objective tests of knowledge, understanding and application of the rules and conventions of functional grammar and composition.

MINNESOTA, continued

Scoring method: Analytical.

Assessment type: Sample

Note: The assessment devices comprise a language arts package available to schools and/or districts for local assessment during and after the statewide assessment.

Contact person: William McMillan
Assessment Program Director
(612) 296-6002

MISSISSIPPI

No statewide assessment.

Contact person: Jack Gun
Division of Instruction
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205

MISSOURI

Basic Essential Skills Test (BEST)

Grade	Task
8	State requires mastery of a writing objective as part of the Basic Essential Skills Test (BEST). Local school districts determine specific assessment procedures.

Scoring method: Locally determined

Assessment type: Comprehensive

Contact person: Grace McReynolds, Director
Curriculum Development
(314) 751-2625

MONTANA

No statewide assessment. Local school districts use a variety of writing assessment instruments.

Contact person: Claudette Morton
Language Arts Specialist
(406) 449-3095

NEBRASKA

Nebraska Assessment Battery of Essential Learning Skills (NABELS). Tests mechanical skills of written communication (e.g., spelling, punctuation, handwriting) by having students take dictation of 100-word selection presented on cassette tape. Spelling supplement requires spelling of 20 random words from 250 "difficult" words on 1000 word list of most frequent words in the English language.

Assessment type: Comprehensive

Purpose: To determine whether the student is able to encode the mechanical forms of the language, including spelling, paragraph form, use of capital letters, use of punctuation, and legibility.

Note: The test is first given in grade 5, but is repeated until mastery is attained.

Contact person: Harriet Egertson, Consultant
(402) 471-2295

NEVADA

Nevada Proficiency Examination Program

Grade	Task
9	Write a paragraph; write a business letter.
11	Same as Grade 9.

Scoring method: Holistic

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Purpose: Grade 9-Screening test. Grade 11-To certify minimum requirements for diploma.

NEVADA, continued

Contact person: Director, Nevada Proficiency Examination
Department of Education
Capitol Complex
Carsen City, NV 89710

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Educational Assessment Program

Grade	Task
5	Write a business letter. Included are 9 step-by-step directions for pre-writing and editing tasks to refine writing.
9	Write a business letter. Included are 7 step-by-step directions for pre-writing and editing tasks to refine writing.
12	Write a business letter. Included are 6 step-by-step directions for pre-writing and editing tasks to refine writing.

Scoring method: Holistic.

Assessment type: Sample. 6,000 students at each grade level.

Purpose: To promote instructional improvement.

Contact person: Charles Marston
Assistant Chief
(603) 271-3235

NEW JERSEY

New Jersey High School Proficiency Test-Writing Component

Grade	Task
9	Write an essay; take a 54-item multiple choice test concerning three specific skill areas--sentence structure, organization of ideas, and editing.

Scoring Method: Registered holistic (1 to 6 scale).

NEW JERSEY, continued

Purpose: Diagnostic (using registered holistic scale) and to certify graduation competency in writing as well as provide feedback to parents, teachers and students. Information regarding the writing skills may be used for analysis of strengths and weaknesses of students' writing skills, affirmation of existing program criteria or a base for curricular change, or support for the validity of specific instructional methods and activities.

Assessment type: Comprehensive

Note: Graduation requirement directs that 9th grade students pass the HSPT-Reading, Writing and Mathematics beginning in 1985-86.

Contact person: Diane Braungart
(609) 292-5180

NEW MEXICO

Basic Skills Assessment Writing Sample

Grade	Task
10	Write a business letter; write an abbreviated message or announcement; fill out an application form; write a reminiscence essay.

Scoring method: Holistic

Assessment type: Sample. Approximately 1,000 10th graders.

Purpose: To provide the state with initial, base-line data for determining the level of student proficiency throughout the state, and to disseminate comparative information to school districts to help refine local means of administering and scoring the Writing Appraisal portion of the New Mexico High School Proficiency Examination.

Contact person: Howare Scheiber,
English & Writing Specialist
State of New Mexico - Dept. of Education
Education Bldg.
Santa Fe, NM 87501-2786

NEW YORK

New York State Tests

Grade	Task
5	Two writing tasks requiring student to write about 150 words for each task.
8/9	Business letter, report, persuasive discourse (composition)
11	Business letter, report, persuasive discourse (composition)

Scoring method: Holistic.

Assessment type: Comprehensive

Purpose: Tests for grade 5 and grade 8 or 9 aid in the identification of students who need special help in developing their writing skills.

Test for grade 11 or 12 must be passed in order to receive a high school diploma. (Other testing alternatives provided.)

Contact person: Winsor Lott, Director
Division of Educational Testing
State Education Department
Albany, NY 12234

NORTH CAROLINA

Statewide assessment in development.

Grade	Task
6	Write a descriptive composition; write a clarification composition.
9	Write a point of view composition; write a persuasive composition.
11	Write a persuasive paragraph; write a message; take a "writing mechanics" objective test.

NORTH CAROLINA, continued

Scoring method: Undecided. Will consider focused holistic and analytic checklist.

Assessment type: Sample. 7,500 students at grades 6 & 9. Comprehensive. Grade 11 may be required to take the writing test as a component of minimum competency test beginning 1987.

Purpose: Information obtained from tests may be used for planning for the instruction, time allocation, and resources necessary for those who have not made adequate progress in acquiring essential writing skills.

Contact person: William Brown
Special Assistant for Research
State of NC Department of Education
Raleigh, NC 27611

NORTH DAKOTA

No statewide assessment.

Contact person: Ethel Lowry
Elementary Education
Department of Public Instruction
Bismarck, ND 5805

OHIO

No statewide assessment. Beginning 1984-85, school districts will be required to develop competency-based education programs and assessment procedures for such programs.

Contact person: E. Roger Trent
Test Development Consultant
(614) 466-2471

OKLAHOMA

No statewide assessment.

Contact person: Sharon Lease
Curriculum Section
State Department of Education
2500 N Lincoln Blvd
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

OREGON

Oregon Statewide Assessment

Grade	Task
8	To be determined.

Scoring method: Analytical.

Assessment type: Sample. 6000 students.

Purpose: To provide educators and the general public with an overall view of trends in student achievement. To identify students' relative strengths and weaknesses in writing.

Contact person: Director
Oregon Statewide Assessment-Writing
Department of Education
700 Pringle Parkway SE
Salem, OR 97310

PENNSYLVANIA

Educational Quality Assessment

Grade	Task
5	Take an objective test of writing skills.
8	Take an objective test of writing skills.
11	Take an objective test of writing skills.

Assessment type: Sample. 180,000 students

Purpose: Provide information to schools about basic skills achievement.

PENNSYLVANIA, continued

Contact person: J. Robert Coldiron
Division of Educational Quality Assessment
(717) 787-4234

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Life Skills Test

Grade	Task
3	Write at least one essay on a selected topic; take an objective referenced, multiple choice test.
6	Same as Grade 4.
8	Same as Grade 4.
10	Same as Grade 4.

Scoring method: To be determined.

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Contact person: Martha Highsmith
(401) 277-3126

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program

Grade	Task
6	Write a narrative selection, an expository selection, and a descriptive selection.
8	Write a narrative selection, an expository selection, and a descriptive selection.
11	Write a persuasive selection, a narrative selection, an expository selection, and a descriptive selection.

Scoring method: Modified holistic. Papers are scored on a 4 point scale. Papers receiving less than "3" are scored analytically.

Assessment type: Comprehensive

SOUTH CAROLINA, continued

Purpose: To evaluate student writing skills, and to identify students for remedial programs.

Note: Only one type (narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive) of writing (per grade) is assessed in any one test administration. The grade 11 assessment will be replaced with grade 10 beginning in Spring 1986. The grade 10 writing assessment will be part of an "exit" examination required for a state high school diploma. The diploma requirement becomes effective for graduates in 1989-90 and thereafter.

Contact person: Paul Sandifer, Director
Office of Research
State of South Carolina
Department of Education
Columbia, SC 29201

SOUTH DAKOTA

No statewide assessment

Contact person: James Hansen
State Superintendent
Elementary and Secondary Education
Richard Kniep Bldg.
Pierre, SD 57501

TENNESSEE

Currently piloting a basic language skills test containing functional and creative written composition tasks which include writing sentences, organizing and developing paragraphs, creative writing, functional writing, proofreading, and revision.

Contact person: Jack Roberts
Director of Basic Skills
State Department of Education
East Tennessee District Office
Dempster Bldg
305 West Springdale Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37917

TEXAS

Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS)

Includes multiple choice items on components of writing. Written composition assessment may contain any of the following:

Grade	Task
3	Write a story; write instructions that tell how to do something; write a description of an object or scene.
5	Write about how two objects are alike or different; write about reasons for a particular course of actions; write about any of the Grade 3 topics.
Exit Level	Write a story; write a descripstion of an object, scene or concept; write to compare and contrast objects, events; ideas or concepts; write about the advantages or disadvantages of a given subject; write proposing a solution to a problem; write stating a position on a topic to influence an audience.

Scoring method: Focused holistic.

Assessment type: Comprehensive.

Purpose: To determine individual student mastery of specific objectives so that districts can implement appropriate compensatory instructional services for students.

Contact person: J.B. Morgan
Associate commissioner
for Assessment and Evaluation
Texas Education Agency
201 E. Eleventh Street
Austin, TX 78701

UTAH

No statewide assessment. State requires minimum competency testing and local districts determine their own competency tests, competency levels, and assessment procedures. Objectives based on student outcomes are being established for each grade level.

UTAH, continued

Contact person: Leroy Lindeman
Office of Curriculum & Instruction
(801) 533-5431

VERMONT

No statewide assessment. State sets minimum competency levels and local districts determine assessment methods.

Contact person: Karlene Russell
Director of Instructional Services
State Office Bldg.
Montpelier, VT 05602

VIRGINIA

A program that will incorporate some writing assessment is being developed by the state. Writing objectives will be included for all grades, K-12.

Contact person: Gerald Bracey
Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of Education
P.O. Box 6Q
Richmond, VA 23216

WASHINGTON

No statewide assessment. Local districts determine curriculum, competency levels and assessment.

Contact person: Fred Bannister
(206) 735-7389

WEST VIRGINIA

No statewide assessment.

WEST VIRGINIA, continued

Note: A field test is being conducted at 9th and 11th grades. Twelve prompts are being administered and scored statewide to a sample of students in about 200 schools. Papers will be scored using a modified holistic method. Future assessments depend upon outcome of this one.

Contact person: Thomas Mantebell
Coordinator of Student Testing
Department of Education
Capitol Complex
Bldg 6, Room B-057
Charleston, WA 25305

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Pupil Assessment Program

Grade	Task
5	Write a narrative composition (impromptu); write a science report (with revision).
8	(Same as Grade 5).
11	Write a narrative composition (impromptu); write a persuasive essay (with revision).

Note: Two writing samples, one impromptu (written in one session), and one with extra time for revision (written in two sessions), are obtained in the assessment.

Scoring method: Holistic, primary trait.

Assessment type: Sample. 3541 students.

Purpose: To obtain valid and reliable information about the general status of educational achievement in the state.

Note: Analysis of the kinds, extent and quality of revisions made by students in the statewide assessment is performed. A questionnaire regarding student attitudes toward and experiences in writing is included in the assessment.

Contact person: Vicki Frederick
(608) 267-7268

WYOMING

No statewide assessment. State has minimum competency policy. Local districts determine curriculum and assessment.

Contact person: Alan Wheeler
General Programs Unit
Hathaway Bldg
Cheyenne, WY 82002

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